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March 2013

### Human Resources, User Education Marketing Strategy, and Students' Use of Library Services in Some Nigerian Federal Universities

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Umeozor, Susan, "Human Resources, User Education Marketing Strategy, and Students' Use of Library Services in Some Nigerian Federal Universities" (2013). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 888. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/888>

# *Library Philosophy and Practice*

ISSN 1522-0222

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## **Human Resources, User Education Marketing Strategy, and Students' Use of Library Services in Some Nigerian Federal Universities**

### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to assess the distribution of librarians by university, gender, years of experience and qualification and to determine the influence of user education marketing strategy on students' use of libraries in four Nigerian Universities. Ex-post-facto design was used for the study and the instruments for data collection were two researcher-developed questionnaires, one for the librarians and the other for the students. Data obtained were analyzed using independent t-test statistics. Results indicated that all the universities investigated are gender sensitive in their employment; both sexes are almost equally represented. The librarians are well experienced staff since 92% of them have working experience of 11 or more years; only 8% of the librarians are within the 1-10 years of experience bracket. Also the librarians are highly qualified professionals with at least a Bachelor of Library Science degree. The positive response of the librarians to the provision of user education marketing strategy and the response of students to the utilization of the strategy showed a similar trend. In both responses, library orientation component of the user education marketing strategy had the highest positive response followed by compulsory library instruction course and then training on information search and retrieval skills while individualized instruction on library usage at the information desk had the least response. The similarity in the responses indicated a true reflection of the level of provision and utilization of these components of user education programmes in the institutions studied. Independent t-test indicated that the provision of user education programme significantly enhanced students' use of library services and resources.

## **Introduction**

Information is indispensable in all spheres of life that no organizations or individuals can function effectively without it. Library has been recognized as a major and important source of information in any society. It should be emphasized that the quality and quantity of services provided by academic libraries vary greatly from one university to another depending on the financial status, academic programmes, students' population, and the mission of the parent institution. Nevertheless, these services are designed to enhance the teaching, learning, and research activities in the university community. It has been observed that the three major factors that determine the use of library services are need, user, and source of information (Sridhar, 1994). These factors and their interactions may explain why library collections and services are underutilized.

Buckland (1999) stated that library services, as information services, are expected to have various positive effects on the user. Hence, library services are created to inform, influence users' opinions and attitudes about issues and, more importantly, inspire their quest for knowledge which is essential for the advancement of individuals and societies. This is why librarians are seriously concerned about the underutilization of these services especially in the academic environment. It is regrettable that libraries and librarians in many developing countries including Nigeria are yet to take their proper positions in the society; they are still pleading for patronage and recognition. This research was conducted to assess the distribution of librarians by university, gender, years of experience and qualifications, and to determine the influence of user education marketing strategy on students' use of libraries in Federal universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

Academic libraries engage in activities which revolve around the provision of certain defined services and ensuring that these services are utilized. It is assumed that effective and efficient use of library services guarantees improved academic performance of students and enhances teaching and research outputs. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) observed that by ensuring availability of learning resources, Nigerian university libraries would be in a position to provide essential services to scholarship and research. Similarly, Obi (2005) opined that basic function of academic library is to service to the fullest the educational objectives of the parent institution with needed resources, facilities and services. As a result, various university libraries struggle to anticipate the information needs of users and provide necessary services and resources to meet these needs.

A study by Lawal and Amusa (2005) revealed that most Nigerians do not see the relevance of library as a means of furthering their education, extending the frontier of knowledge, and as a source of obtaining a quick reference. This obvious lack of patronage and perception of the roles of the library may have been one of the reasons for the low literacy level and poor reading culture in Nigeria. They further observed that most literate Nigerians, especially students, do not patronize libraries for self-education; they rather confine themselves to consulting lecturers' notes, handouts and textbooks, thus reading only to pass examinations. Consequently, librarians are enjoined to create

awareness for the relevance of library resources and services by aggressively marketing them.

Several scholars have offered different definitions of marketing. Cornfield (2001) defined marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchange that satisfies individual and organizational objectives. Similarly, Justin and Parameswari (2002) defined marketing as planning and managing organization's exchange relations with its clientele. It is important to note the emphasis on the concept of "exchange relationships" in most of these definitions. In the business world, this exchange consists of products or services in return for money. However, in non-profit organizations such as libraries and information centers, the exchange has to do with services, programmes, and resources in return for patronage, better funding, and recognition.

Other scholars have advocated the adoption of marketing principles in the management and operations of libraries. Kotler and Levy (1981) concluded that the choice facing those who manage non-business organizations (such as libraries) is not whether or not to market (for no organization can avoid marketing) but rather the choice is whether to do it well or poorly. Thus, there is an increase in the recognition of the importance of marketing library and information services due to low library patronage, insufficient funding, and increased competition in information industry.

### **User Education and Students' Use of Library Services**

Academic libraries are expected to render maximum services in order to meet information needs of their major clienteles as effective and efficient use of library resources and services by students may improve academic performance. Grimes and Charters (2002) corroborated this as they stressed that the ability to use library resources to identify, access, and retrieve information is essential for the successful completion of a university degree. However, scholars such as Ibegwam (1996), Ikegbune (1997) and Arua and Chikezie (2006) observed that students often fail to exploit to the fullest the intellectual content of the library. This necessitated the introduction of user education programmes in most academic libraries to enable users maximally utilize libraries services and resources.

User education is an instruction given to users to enable them make optimum use of the library. It is variously referred to as library use instruction, library orientation, reader education, and information literacy among others. User education is various programmes of instruction, education, and exploration provided by librarians to create the awareness for services and enable users make effective, efficient, and independent use of library services and resources (Fleming, 1990; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2008). Information overload has a dampening effect on the use of the library. Students and researchers face an ever-growing mass of information distributed in a variety of formats – print and online/internet. Users that lack essential information search skills find it difficult to search and retrieve relevant information. Kasowitz-Scheer (2002) and Murugan (2011) observed that students today face daily explosion of information resources and the challenge of using these effectively and responsibly. Bhatti (2010)

recommended that user education should be a continuous process organized for all user groups to ensure that they are equipped with efficient methods of accessing, evaluating, and synthesizing information into a coherent whole. Vasanthi (2001) and Galvin (2005) opined that with the proliferation of electronic resources, training and retraining of users in the use of IT based resources should be an integral part of user education in academic libraries. Major purposes and benefits of user education include developing awareness for and appreciation of library services and resources, encouraging users to exploit these for their intellectual growth and development, imparting in users information search skills essential for life-long learning, and developing independent and efficient learners and library users (Akinyode, 1984; Oboko, 1985; Ogunleye, 1987; Babakisi, 1995; Yeboah, 1999; Vasanthi, 2001; Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002; Sanborn, 2005). It may be concluded that the basic objectives of any user education programme are to create awareness for the availability and enhance users' access to information.

### **Components of User Education**

There are two basic levels of user education which are library orientation and bibliographic instruction. Library orientation is the first level of user education programme. It refers to the basic introduction to library services and resources given to new students and staff. This, according to Babakisi (1995) and Murugan (2011), may include library tour, library guides on the layout, and library registration. It may involve the librarian introducing new students (majority of who come from secondary schools with poor or no school library systems) to the complexities of university library facilities. Dabbour (1997) corroborated this by stressing that library orientation was designed to help students make the transition from high school to college. For Akinyode (1984), library orientation helps people to feel the awareness of and comfortable with the building and the services available, with the location of collection, and with people who services these collections. He reiterated that this is the first level and must precede the second level (bibliographic instruction).

Often bibliographic tools such as abstracts, indexes, among others are difficult to use or understand because of the complexity in their organization. For Murugan (2011), bibliographic instruction provides guidance on how to use specific information sources and tools and to understand their features and subject coverage. Akinyode (1984) recommended that this be given in two stages – an introductory course for undergraduates and more advanced course for postgraduates and staff. Different universities employ a variety of approaches for their user education programmes. These, as reported by Ogunleye (1987) and Dabbour (1997), are credit-earning or non-credit earning courses, elective or compulsory courses, course integrated or stand-alone courses, user education integrated into the core curriculum and general information literacy courses. Scholars have repeatedly stressed that it is the basic responsibility of university libraries to teach students how to effectively use the library resources and services. This is even more imperative in Nigerian universities since there is a very poor or non-existent school library system. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) observed that many Nigerian freshmen may never have used a library before enrolling in our universities. User education can be an effective promotional strategy for the use of library services and resources. It is

assumed that improving user information search skills may lead to an increase in library use.

## Methodology

The *Ex-post-facto* research design was used for this study. The choice of this design was based on the fact that the events (user education and library usage) to be measured had already occurred; the author only studied their relationship in retrospect without current interactions between the independent and the dependent variables. The populations comprised all Librarians and all registered student library users in the Federal University libraries in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population size was estimated at 16,000 students and 68 librarians. The sample size was 1,600 registered student library users representing 10% of the total population. Systematic (proportional sampling technique) sampling technique was used to select 10% of registered library users from each of the Federal Universities under study. Also a sample size of 68 librarians was used for the study, implying that the entire librarian population in the study area was involved. The distribution of the sample is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Number of respondents from the Universities studied.**

University	Number of student users	Number of librarian	Number sampled	
			Students	Librarians
Benin	4,100	18	394	18
Calabar	3,900	19	370	19
Port Harcourt	4,200	16	380	16
Uyo	3,800	15	360	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>68</b>

**Source:** Registered users statistics and library staff list.

Two researcher-developed questionnaires: User Education in South-South University Libraries Questionnaire (UESSULQ) and User Education and Library Usage Questionnaire (UELUQ) were used for data collection. The UESSULQ was designed to solicit for librarians' opinion regarding the availability of user education programme in their respective university libraries. The UELUQ was designed to measure users' rating of the different components of user education programme and their level of utilization of library services and resources provided in their respective university libraries.

The UESSULQ has two sections, A and B. Section A solicited for respondents' demographic data, while section B solicited for the respondents' opinion regarding user education programme adopted by the library management, and rated on a 5 point scale. The opinion scale for this section consisted of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) responses scored 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The UELUQ for registered student users had three sections. Section A solicited for respondent demographic data, while section B focused on available user education programme and section C focused on frequency of utilization of library services and resources by students all rated on a 5 – point Likert scale. The response categories for section C were very often (VO), often (O), occasionally (OC), rarely (R), and never (N),

scored 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The responses from section B of UELUQ were used in categorizing the components of user education as either available or unavailable, while the responses from section C were used as the dependent variable. The researcher personally visited all the Federal university libraries in the study area and with the help of some library staff administered the questionnaire to respondents in each institution. The completed questionnaires were returned after completion. This was to forestall non-return of the questionnaire. The data obtained were analyzed using independent *t*-test statistics at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

## Results and Discussion

A total of 1,600 copies of User Education and Library Usage Questionnaire (UELUQ) were distributed to registered library users in the four federal universities. However, 1,510 were returned with valid responses. With respect to User Education in South-South University Library Questionnaire (UESSULQ), 68 copies were distributed but 62 valid responses were returned.

Table 2 indicates that 33 (53.2%) librarians were male and 29 (46.8) were female. The distribution by years of experience shows that only 5 (8%) librarians were within 1-10 years category, 28 (45.2%) within 11-20years; 15 (24.2%) within 21-30 years, and 14 (22.6%) within 31 years and above. With respect to the distribution by qualification, Table 2 shows that 14 (22.6%) librarians possessed BLS degree certificate, 38 (61.3%) possessed MLS degree certificate, and 10 (16.1%) are holders of Ph. D certificate in library science. An analysis of these distributions showed that, with respect to gender distribution, all the universities investigated are gender sensitive in their employment; both sexes are almost equally represented.

**Table 2. Distribution of librarians by university, gender, years of experience and qualification.**

Categories		University							
		UNIBEN		UNICAL		UNIPORT		UNIUYO	
		f*	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Gender	Male	11	64.7	10	55.6	6	46.2	6	42.9
	Female	6	35.3	8	44.4	7	53.5	8	57.1
	Total	17	100.0	18	100.0	13	100.0	14	100.0
Yrs. of Experience									
	1- 10 years	4	23.5	1	5.6	0	0	0	0
	11- 20 years	4	23.5	11	61.1	5	38.5	8	57.1
	21-30years	2	11.8	5	27.5	5	38.5	3	21.4
	31 years & above	7	41.2	1	5.6	3	23.1	3	21.4
Total	Total	17	100.0	18	100.0	13	100.0	14	100.0
Qualifications									
	BLS	3	17.6	4	22.3	4	30.8	3	21.4
	MLS	14	82.4	8	44.4	7	53.8	9	64.3
	Ph. D.	0	0	6	33.3	2	15.4	2	14.3
	Total	17	100.0	18	100.0	13	100.0	14	100.0

\*f = frequency count.



With regards to experience, 92% of the librarians are well experienced staff with working experience of 11 years or more; only 5 (8%) are within 1–10 years of experience bracket. This indicated that for some years now there have been no fresh appointments in the library service, most notably, in the universities of Port Harcourt and Uyo where there was no librarian in this category. As regards qualification, the distribution in Table 2 shows that the librarians are highly qualified professionals with BLS or above degrees in library science. This suggests a better service delivery.

The results in Table 3 show that the state of library orientation in all the four universities investigated is very satisfactory. The sum of agreed (A) and strongly agreed (SA) responses indicated 100% utilization of this aspect of user education marketing strategy in all the universities. This was followed by making use of library instruction course a compulsory requirement in all the universities. Both the universities of Calabar and Uyo indicated 100% utilization of this component of user education marketing strategy. These strategies were followed by giving users training on information search and retrieval skills, in which none of the universities scored below 60%, and regularly giving users individualized instructions on library usage at the information desk, in which the average percentage rating in the universities was not below 50%. However, it should be noted that this was the least used component of user education marketing strategy.



**Table 3. Librarians' responses on user education marketing strategy classified by universities.**

Categories		Response categories *	University							
			UNIBEN (N=17)		UNICAL (N=18)		UNIPOR T (N=13)		UNIUY O (N=14)	
			f*	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
S/N	Items of User Education									
1	Students are given orientation to get acquainted with library services	SD	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
		D	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
		U	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
		A	6	35.3	7	38.9	2	15.4	3	21.4
		SA	11	64.7	11	61.1	11	84.6	11	78.6
2	Students are required to take use of library instruction course	SD	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
		D	2	11.8	-	0	2	15.4	-	0
		U	3	17.6	-	0	-	-	-	0
		A	10	58.8	5	27.8	4	30.8	4	28.6
		SA	2	11.8	13	72.2	7	53.8	10	71.4
3	Students are given training on information search and retrieval	SD	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
		D	2	11.8	1	5.6	3	23.1	-	0
		U	3	17.6	1	5.6	2	15.4	1	7.1
		A	10	58.8	11	61.1	5	38.5	7	50.0
		SA	2	11.8	5	27.8	3	23.1	6	42.9
4	Students are regularly given individualized instruction on library usage at information desk	SD	3	17.6	1	5.6	-	0	-	0
		D	2	11.8	2	11.1	5	38.5	1	7.1
		U	-	-	4	22.2	1	7.7	3	21.4
		A	9	52.9	9	50.0	5	38.5	8	57.1
		SA	3	17.6	2	11.1	2	15.4	2	14.3

\*f = frequency count. \*SD = strongly disagree; D= disagree; U = undecided; A = agree; SA= strongly agree

The sum of the agreed (A) and strongly agreed (SA) student responses in the utilization of library orientation component of user education marketing strategy ranged from 79 – 93% in the four universities investigated (Table 4). University of Benin had the least response of 79% while University of Uyo had the highest response of 93%. On compulsory library instruction course, the range was from 75-94% with university of Port Harcourt having the least response of 75% and University of Calabar having the highest response of 94%.

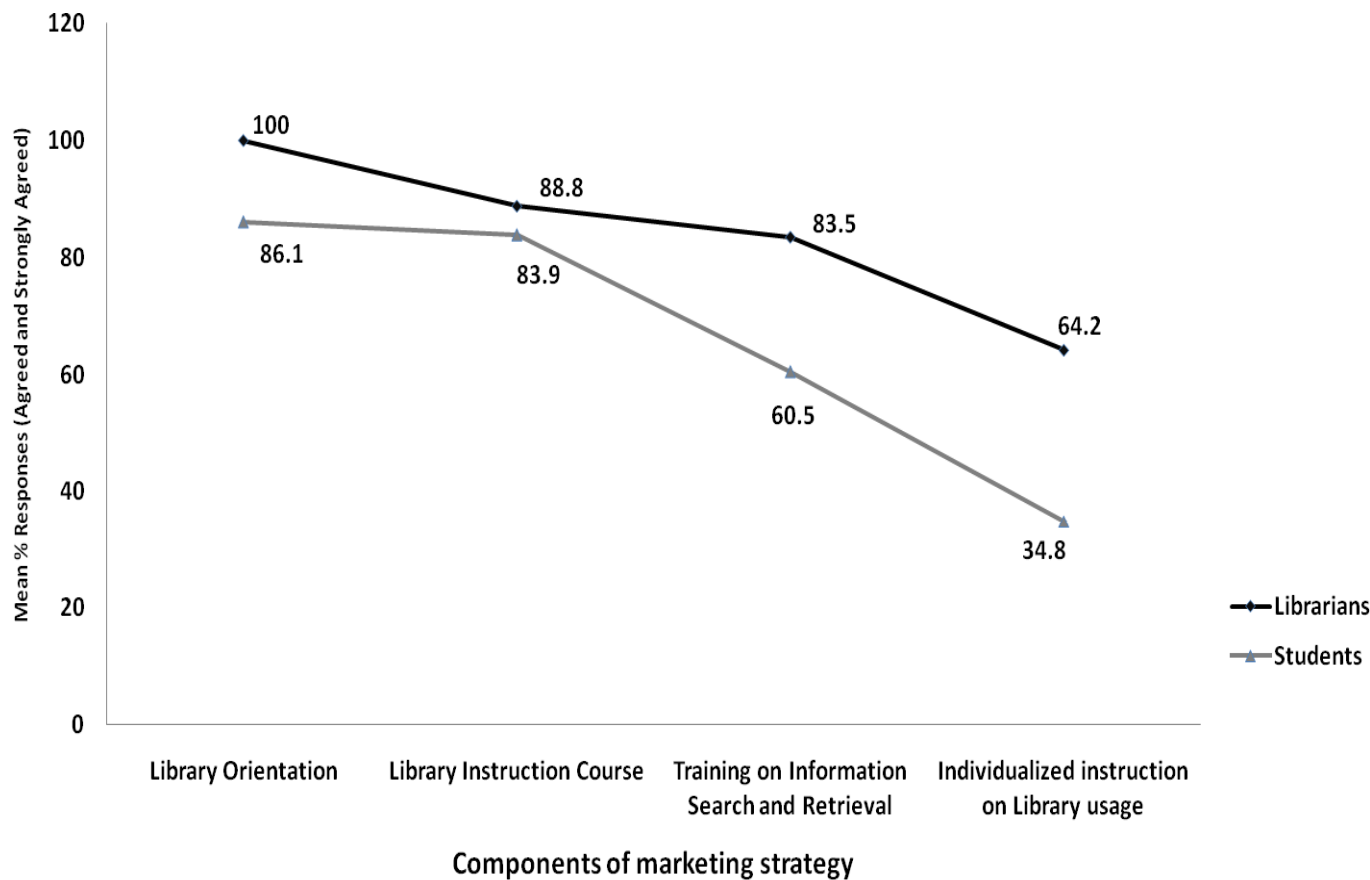
**Table 4. Students' responses on user education marketing strategy classified by universities.**

Categories		Response categories*	University							
			UNIBEN (N=394)		UNICAL (N=370)		UNIPORT (N=380)		UNIUYO (N=366)	
S/N	Items of User Education		f*	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Students are given orientation to get acquainted with library services	SD	20	5.1	5	1.4	14	3.7	5	1.4
		D	35	8.9	25	6.8	43	11.3	14	3.8
		U	28	7.1	7	1.9	11	2.9	5	1.4
		A	164	41.6	141	38.1	174	45.8	149	40.7
		SA	147	37.3	192	51.9	138	36.3	193	52.7
2	Students are required to take use of library instruction course	SD	11	2.8	3	0.8	20	5.3	6	1.6
		D	31	7.9	8	2.2	35	9.2	18	4.9
		U	32	8.1	13	3.5	40	10.5	28	7.7
		A	142	36.0	124	33.5	158	41.6	136	37.2
		SA	178	45.2	222	60.0	127	33.4	178	48.6
3	Students are given training on information search and retrieval	SD	44	11.2	22	6.0	56	14.7	14	3.8
		D	99	25.1	47	12.7	81	21.3	45	12.3
		U	58	14.7	42	11.4	58	15.3	35	9.6
		A	135	34.3	160	43.2	125	32.9	166	45.4
		SA	58	14.7	99	26.8	60	15.8	106	29.0
4	Students are regularly given individualized instruction on library usage at information desk	SD	75	19.0	66	17.8	87	22.9	55	15.0
		D	130	33.0	111	30.0	147	38.7	100	27.3
		U	55	14.0	46	12.4	49	12.9	65	17.8
		A	104	26.4	104	28.1	76	20.0	95	26.0
		SA	30	7.6	43	11.6	21	5.5	51	13.9

\*SD = strongly disagree; D= disagree; U = undecided; A = agree;  
SA = strongly agree; \*f = frequency count.

With regards to giving a training on information search and retrieval, the response ranged from 49-74% with Universities of Benin and Port Harcourt having the least response of 49% and the University of Uyo having the highest response of 74%. The least used component of user education marketing strategy was individualized instructions in library usage at the circulation desk. Student responses to this component ranged from 26% in the University of Port Harcourt to 40% in the Universities of Calabar and Uyo (Table 4). The mean percentage response of the students to the four components showed a similar trend to the response of the librarians. In both responses, library orientation had the highest positive response followed by compulsory library instruction course and training on information search and retrieval skills while individualized instruction on library usage at the circulation desk had the least response (Fig. 1). The librarians provide library

services while students are the major end users of these services. The similar trend observed in the responses of these two groups indicated a true reflection of the level of provision and utilization of these components of user education marketing strategy in these institutions.



**Figure 1: Librarians and students' positive responses to user education marketing strategies in four Nigerian Federal Universities**

The results in Table 5 on the influence of availability of user education on students' use of library show calculated  $t$ -value,  $t$ -cal, of 7.14 and its corresponding critical value,  $t$ -crit of 1.96 at df 1508 and  $P > .05$  alpha. The  $t$ -cal (7.14) is greater than the  $t$ -crit (1.96). This indicates that availability of user education exerted a significant influence on students' use of library services. The means scores of 44.75 for availability and 40.23 for unavailability (Table 5) show that students make effective use of library services when they are adequately educated on the available services and products in the library. The findings from the results in Table 5 indicate that provision of user education significantly enhanced students' use of library services and products. This underscores the need for the library authorities in academic institutions to provide user instructions on information literacy.

**Table 5. Independent *t*-test summary of students' responses on the influence of availability of user education on their use of library**

User Education	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -cal	df	<i>t</i> -crit	Decision
Available	958	44.75	12.55	7.14	1508	1.96	S
Unavailable	552	40.23	10.55				

S = significant at  $P < .05$  alpha

According to Kasowitz-Scheer (2002) students today face daily explosion of information resources and the challenge of using these effectively and responsibly. It is, therefore, imperative to help them learn how to obtain, evaluate, and handle information efficiently and to be well equipped with efficient methods of accessing, evaluating, and synthesizing information into a coherent whole. This will go a long way in helping the users to develop awareness for and appreciation of library services and resources in their respective institutions.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that user education exerted a significant influence on students' use of the library. This implies that the more frequent and effective the marketing of library resources and services, the more the student use of the library. The Management of these universities should, therefore, make an effective use of user education marketing strategy in promoting their resources and services in order to enhance and sustain users' satisfaction and patronage.

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